

**MINUTES**  
**BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

May 21, 2015

Outdoor Adventure Center  
1801 Atwater  
Detroit, Michigan 48207

**Present for Belle Isle Advisory Committee (BIPAC)**

Michelle Hodges

Michael Curis

Ron Olson

Bryan Barnhill

Rev. Lonnie Peek

Scott Pratt

Bud Denker

Arrived at 9:55 a.m.

Sommer Woods

Arrived at 10:16 a.m.

**Excused Absences**

Alicia Bradford

**News Media Present**

WXYZ (CHANNEL 7)

WWJ (RADIO 950)

Committee chairperson Hodges stated and apologized that the meeting could not be called to order until a forum is established. Because there was not a forum, roll call and approval of minutes from the April 16<sup>th</sup> meeting has been delayed.

Hodges moved on to item #3 on the agenda – Senior Power Days and introduced Stephanie Donaldson.

**Senior Power Days**

Stephanie Donaldson presented a power point presentation on Senior Power Days on Belle Isle. The 11 event series will provide senior programs Detroit seniors as well as seniors in the metro areas.

Senior Power Days will kick-off on July 8, 2015 at the Belle Isle Casino with a summit of senior safety. The event calendar will be posted on the Belle Isle and Conservancy websites. Some of the partnerships are DSO, AREA AGENCY ON AGING and DETROIT GRAND PRIX WHO WILL BE DONATING 600 RECREATION PASSPORTS TO THE SENIORS (SAT. MAY 23, 2015) FRONT YARD OF BELLE ISLE WHITE HOUSE.

### **Red Bull**

Chip-Pankow and Colin Dyne presented the Red Bull Global Rallycross being held on Belle Isle July 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. The race will be broadcasted live on NBC for 2 ½ hours both days. Approximately 5000 spectators are expected to attend the race on Belle Isle.

Chip explained that the event will not affect the park for normal park goers. Also the Casino, Scott Fountain and Sunset areas will be available during that time.

### **Other Highlights**

\$25,000 CONTRIBUTION TO THE PARK

7 TO 8 DAYS SETUP - BREAKDOWN

HIRING LOCAL FOOD VENDORS

Hodges mentioned that there was a phone conference with Red Bull regarding the event, restoration and vendors, etc.

Olson mentioned that there is an organ donor walk previously scheduled on the park on the same days, and a partnership was established between the two groups. Red Bull will assist with signage for the donor walk event and provide a certified course for the walk.

Olson was also encouraged about some future partnerships with Red Bull on some projects for Belle Isle. Olson added that the presentation was more compressed than when originally brought to the table.

### **Conservancy Update**

Conservatory/Aquarium has a \$5 million dollar estimate to bring the two facilities up to code. The facilities have serious issues with heating, water and sewage. Ron said that the DNR and Conservancy are partnering on the cost of the short term fixes and will continue to collaborate on long term resolutions.

### **Strategic Planning Process**

The conservancy, with funding from the DNR and the Hudson-Webber and Kresge foundations, hired New York-based Biederman Redevelopment Ventures to create the strategic plan to reimagine Belle Isle over the next four to six months. Biederman is known for its work on New York's Bryant Park.

Hodges talked about the article that came out this weekend with some of her comments and wanted to be clear that her or the Conservancy does not advocate heavy commercial development on Belle Isle

Olson added that the island is encumbered with many federal and state grants that will not allow certain development (conversion)

Bud Denker arrived at 9:55 a.m.

Committee person Hodges called the meeting to order at 9:55 a.m. Bud Denker arrived and therefore a forum was established.

### **Infrastructure Issues and Updates**

MacArthur bridge lighting- Bud Denker, Penske in partnership with Tom Gore, owner of the Detroit Pistons repaired all of the wiring, replaced lamp/globes, photo cell and installed LED lighting to the Belle Isle Bridge. A ceremony will be held on May 21<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 p. m. with a helicopter ride over the bridge and Detroit River. In addition, during the Grand Premiere next Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup>, the new lighting around the lagoon will be unveiled. Future projects will involve street lighting on the park.

Hodges said that this project is very impressive

Olson said that it symbolizes when Grand Prix did redo the lighting at the Belle Isle Casino last year. Not only is it visually beautiful, but it also provides energy efficiency, consumption and public safety. He stated that this is a true meaning for "ALL IN FOR BELLE ISLE" through partnership.

Olson also noted that the globes on the bridge were hard to find because of the historic nature of the design and material.

Olson mentioned that the Panda Project is off the table

Athletic Fields - Ron spoke about the \$650,000 grant for Land and Water Conservation that the DNR will match the funds. Upgrading the infrastructure of the athletic fields and the athletic building. Project should be completed within one year. DNR, Conservancy and Come Play Detroit are working together on the project. We welcome other groups and organizations to join and support the project as well.

Hodges mentioned that the National Parks Service will be sending a staff member from the Virgin Islands to Detroit in July, 2015

Olson mentioned that the Fish and Wildlife Service will be partnering as well.

Olson indicated that the problems with the water main breaks affected the restrooms, therefore causing them to be closed. There are three main water breaks on the island. DNR is working on mapping the shutoff location to avoid these situations in the future.

Sommer Woods arrived at 10:16 a.m.

Committee person Hodges went back to item #1 on the Agenda:

#### **Roll Call**

Hodges motioned to approve absences

Curis seconded the motion

#### **Approval of April 16, 2105, Minutes**

Denker made the motion to approved the minutes from April 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. Curis 2 seconded the motion.

#### **Event Updates**

Grand Prix – Charles Burns

Spoke about the new lighting on the Bridge.

Chevrolet's Camero launch on Belle Isle last weekend, May 16th

400 – 500 Journalist were on Belle Isle last weekend, May 17th

Burns thanked MDOT and DNR for working with the Grand Prix to make this happen

Burn spoke about the passport giveaway, Sat. May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00 a.m. on Belle Isle at the White House Administration Office yard area.

Olson mentioned that last year the Grand Prix purchased 1000 recreation passports and 735 were given away. The remaining passports were given to Detroit City Council for distribution. If any are left this year, the same will offered.

The Grand Premiere will be hosted by the Detroit Grand Prix on Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup>

ABC WILL SHOWCASE RACE – MAY 30<sup>th</sup> and MAY 31<sup>st</sup>

Peek mention his show on WDIV (Making a Difference). Bud Denker will be a guest on Sat. May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7:45 a.m.

Peek also mentioned special event (Baptist Church Council Engagement Meeting) on July 16<sup>th</sup> at the Belle Isle Casino. He thanked the DNR for accommodating the facility to host this event.

Hodges spoke about The World Cup of Gardnering event on Belle Isle. Funding is an issue

1<sup>st</sup> Option May have an investor. Will know in June

2<sup>nd</sup> Option Modify the event. Focus on education (horticulture) in conjunction with garden clubs

3<sup>rd</sup> Option Check event dates. Money raised will be used to fund a project on Belle Isle 2016 \$300 to \$400 thousand dollar range.

#### **Law Enforcement** – Lieut. Arthur Green

Gearing up for Grand Prix

Drastically reduced number of arrests on the island

Most encounters are for speeding and driving the wrong way

Number of people entering the park after hours has reduced

Officers are giving out more warnings than violations

Events after Grand Prix – River Days and Fire Works

Peek asked a question – What has been the demeanor of the customers

Lieut. Green responded that most people realize that the officers are at the island to make their visit more enjoyable and to provide a safe environment.

#### **Staffing** – Karis Floyd

Hiring 2 Park Rangers – Belle Isle Park –

Posting 05-22-2015 – State of Michigan website - Neogov

Hiring 2 Park Rangers – Milliken State Park

Casino has new boilers installed

Flynn has new boilers installed, new tile has been laid.

Thanks to the help of Grand Prix

Current Sewer break – Kids Row Concession

Estimated attendance this year should exceed 3 million. Up 1.5 million from last year

Denker asked a question – Are there any restrooms not open?

Kids Row is not available because of the sewer break, but portable toilets will be available for the holiday weekend.

Olson mentioned the golf course restroom and that Healthy Kidz did a wonderful job renovating that facility over the fall. Karis stated that the restroom will be available soon.

Olson mentioned the 5.1 million worth of projects at Belle Isle Park. Hiring a new planner and that employee's office will be at the OAC. There are two candidates, one from Washington DC and the other from Texas. A decision will be made soon.

Hodges mentioned that Erica Hill has resigned and the Conservancy will be looking to fill that position. The community engagement candidate accepted the position and will begin in August

Hodges introduced Summer ?? . Summer was employed with "THAW" and joined the Conservancy as ?

#### **Public Survey** – Ron Olson

5 parties submitted proposals including U of M and MSU

#### **Bike Path Planning** – Michelle Hodges

Hodges thanked Todd Scott on mentioning his concerns regarding the paths. Also there was a meeting with MDOT on April 24<sup>th</sup>.

Important issues in planning: Olson and Hodges

Refer to national guideline

Recognizing issues, doing better, moving forward

New Planner will be helpful in the process

Listening session will be scheduled after the planner is hired

## **PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Mebby Pearson**

1. Bryant Park designers, Biederman, who will do the master plan for BI, do they actually do any environmental planning? We have 200 acres of forest and lots of coast line with erosion issues, etc. The last plans were not charged to do any environmental pieces. This is a must in the planning process.
2. Trees - can DNR cordon off the large trees in the picnic area where people park for the Grand Prix events and all that goes with it so that they are not parking on the root systems of these 100+ year old trees? People do not realize how much damage this does to the trees. We cannot afford to lose more trees in this area. The trees clean the air for us, give us shade, survive 100+ years of Michigan weather. We need to have respect for these trees and protect them by having at least barriers along the drip line of these trees so cars, trucks, etc. cannot park on them. Respect for nature.
3. Ask DNR to model good stewardship behavior by not driving vehicles across the grass to pick up trash, etc. This compacts the soil and causes water to stand. Students hired to pick up trash in season are able to bring the trash cans to the truck and trailer carrying the dumpsters. When I spoke to the police about their practice of pulling off the road near the forested areas where soil is then compacted and ruts were being left, which invites others to park there, they were interested and I think compliant. An area of the forest off Central Avenue was where police parked years back now. That developed into an unauthorized trail for vehicles to drive in and where people apparently partied and have ruined the forest floor. Large ruts are there and a little less than one quarter of a mile in the forest has been ruined. Water stands now in the giant ruts. This sets a fertile stage for invasive plants to grow since it is now disturbed soil.
4. What is the dollar investment in lighting by the Penske Group for the bridge and the lagoon around the reflecting pool in front of the Scott Fountain?

Another question I have for you: Is the Bear Pit restroom open and functioning now?

### **Tom Scott**

1. Talked about bike lanes being stripped.
2. The park needs street sweeping especially on the bridge and sidewalks.

3. Consider moving the Grand Prix to a different day because each year it is too close to the holiday (Memorial Day)

Denker responded by stating that the City of Detroit will be sweeping the bridge and the Grand Prix team will be sweeping and cleaning the sidewalks today.

Olson mention that the DNR will work with MDOT on street cleaning.

### **Pete Forsyth**

1. Issue with Sunday's Free Press article. He gave appreciation to Ron Olson on keeping Belle Isle clean. Especially the restrooms
2. Appreciation to Mr. Denker with the lights and partnership with DNR
3. He spoke about what he appreciates about Belle Isle and the nature that it offers. Sunset Point, Driving, hiking, and picnicking. Concerned about the development in Midtown and Downtown.

### **Donald Green**

1. Talked about acceptance of any gift and/or gratuity is unethical of any state employee.
2. Grand Prix being at Belle Isle restricts public access

### **Other items**

Olson mentioned that we have special events that may use the broad lawn area for parking. The DNR cannot police all vehicle that drive on the grass but will definitely try to inform people of the damages that it may cause.

Curis expressed generosity to the Grand Prix and DNR and how it's a pleasure to work with them.

Olson – Ribbon cutting for OAC – July 16<sup>th</sup>. Grand Opening July 20th

Sommer Woods asked about tours around Belle Isle and said that when sending email messages, please be mindful of the tone that is relayed in the messages. Woods also asked about event and vendors. Why do events have to use Belle Isle authorized vendors if they booked their event last year.



Darlisa Rickman, Events Coordinator stated that all events that are approved through Belle Isle's administration office are told that only authorized vendors are allowed unless the vendors cannot meet their needs. She also stated that this is the policy for Belle Isle Park.

Michelle suggested a meeting with Ron to discuss vendor so as to clarify the process.

Upcoming Events

PRAISE FEST JULY 20<sup>TH</sup>

SUMMER SATURDAY'S 3<sup>RD</sup> SAT OF THE MONTH

PEWABIC TILES AT SCOTT FOUNTAIN JUNE 5<sup>TH</sup>

MOTION TO ADJOURN 11:24 A.M.

2<sup>ND</sup> ?